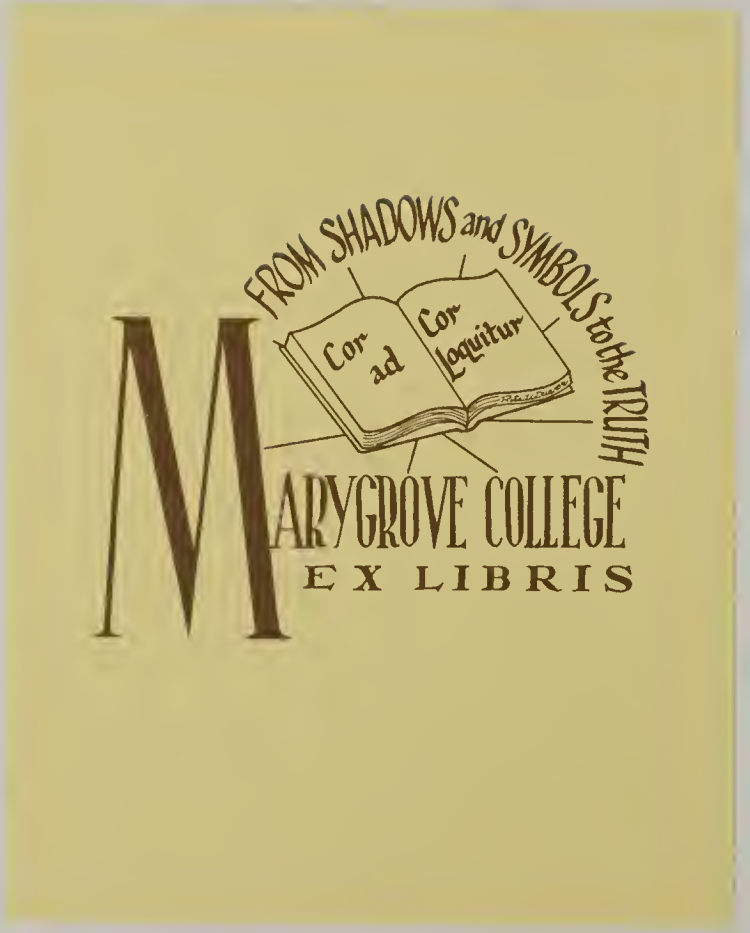
FROM SHADOWS and SYMBOLS to the TRUTH
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LIANG & LO

BY

KURT WIESE

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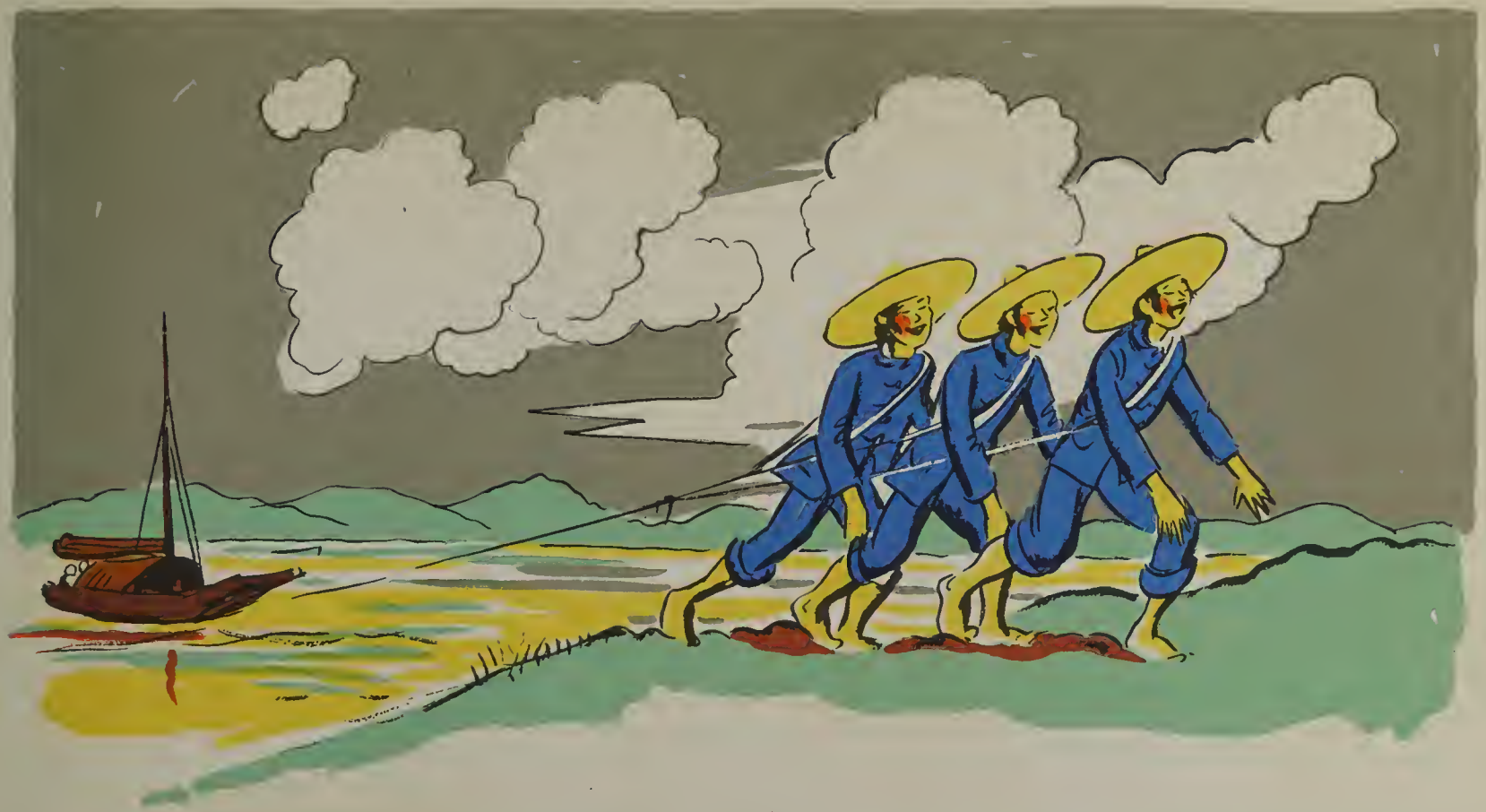
LIANG was the son of a tea merchant in China. One day his father said, "We are going in a boat to visit the place where all the red boxes of tea come from." So, the next day, they went down to the

river and found a nice boat in which they sat for three days and three nights going up the river. When



there was wind they went by sail and when there was no wind the boatmen went ashore and pulled the boat, always singing. They sang the same song over

and over, and the song said:

"We are the men of the river
Who are always happy and gay.
In the cold we do not shiver,
We feel cool on the hottest day.
If there is no wind for sailing
We jump and walk ashore.
Our strength is never-failing
We pull and go on as before."

When father and son had arrived in the country, Liang went through the village and came to the pasture where the buffaloes of the village live. Here he

found Lo, a little boy of his own age, who lived on a buffalo. Yes, he lived on the back of the animal, he ate there and he slept there, and when it was time to go home or to go to the ricefield for work the big animal obeyed every word the little boy shouted into his ear.

On this day the buffalo was resting in the mud. He had sunk quite deep into the brown wet mudhole, but his head stuck out and between the huge horns Lo sat and made little figures out of mud. He pasted them to the horns while they were still wet. Some of them were already dry.

When Liang came to the edge of the mudhole the buffalo snorted and Lo looked up and saw the other little boy. "Hello," he said, "Come up here on the back of my buffalo and play with me. We will make

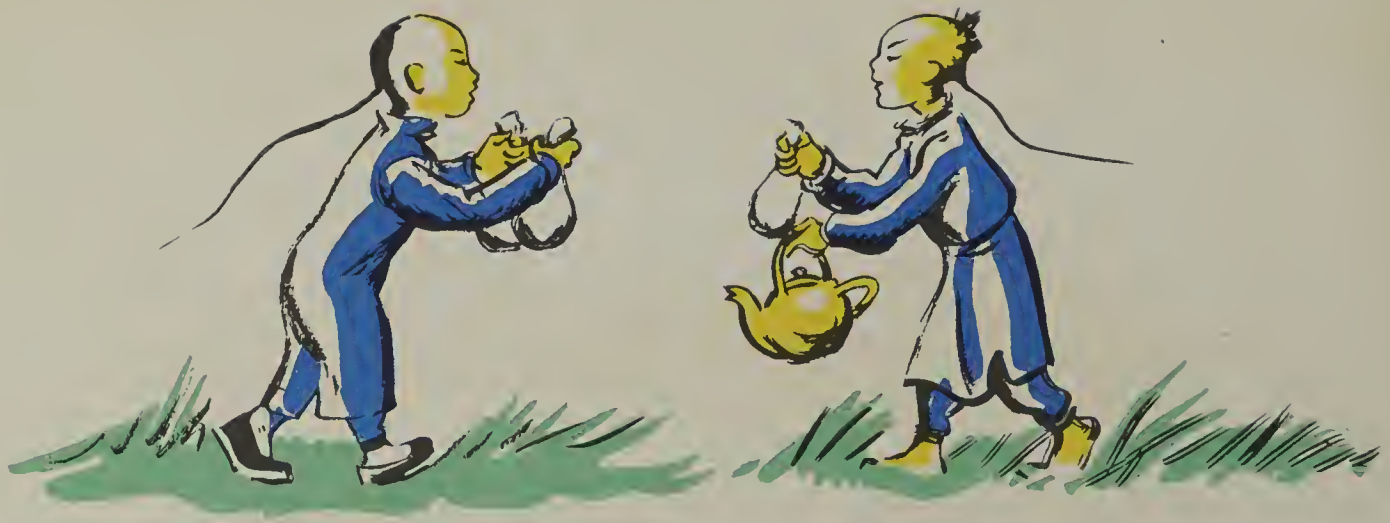
little figures of mud and see who can make the best ones." Liang said, "I cannot get there because I would sink in the mud, so you'd better tell your buffalo to come out on the dry place."

Lo whispered something into the buffalo's ear and the animal snorted and began to move. He rose out of the mud, took a few steps, and came quite near to the place where Liang stood. Then Liang climbed up on the buffalo's neck and sat there with Lo.

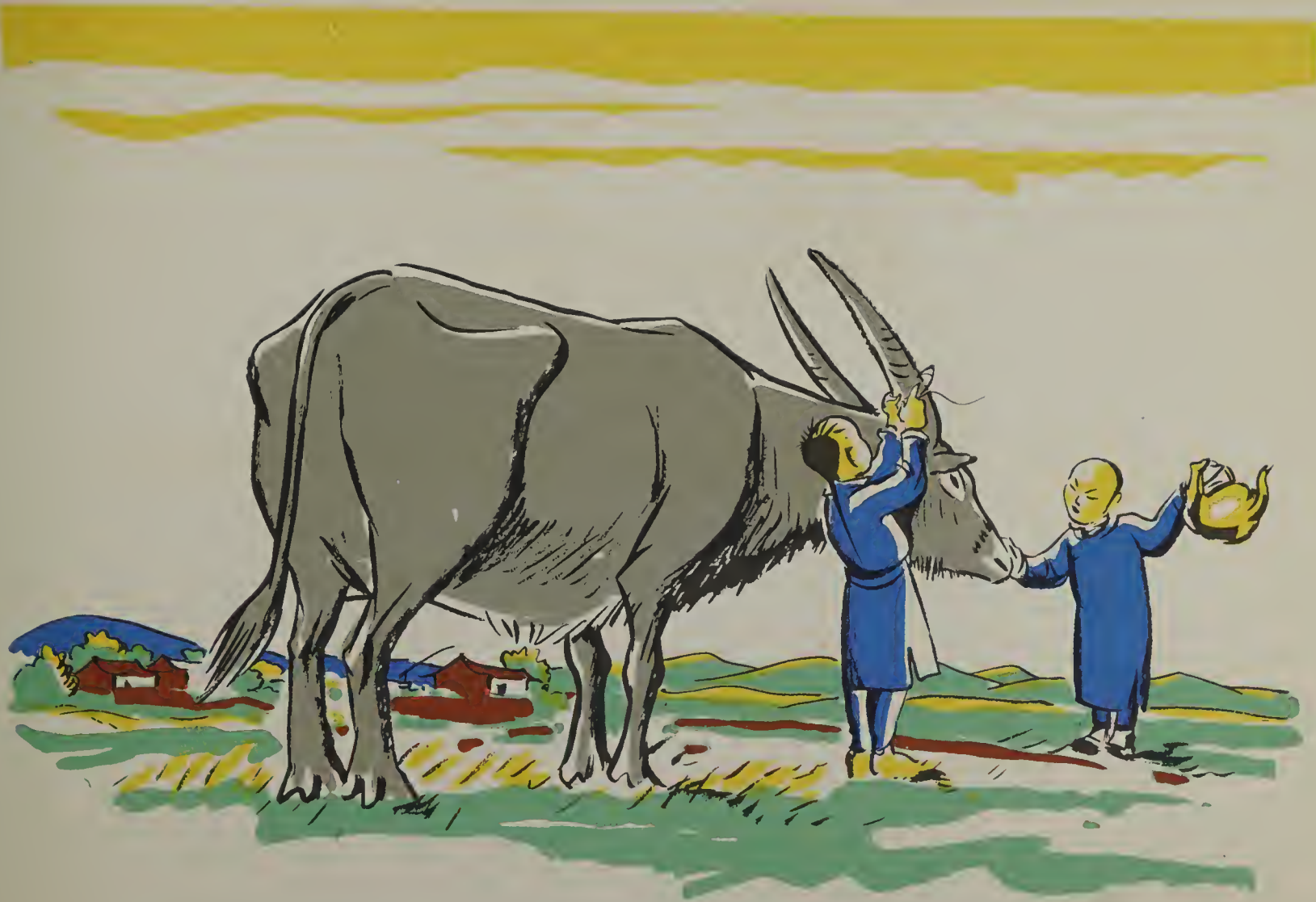
The two boys stayed on the back of the buffalo the whole day, playing and talking together. They made many little figures from clay—sometimes the figures were men, sometimes they were buffaloes, and

then Liang made a little dragon. That made them talk about dragons, and Liang said he had never seen one except in pictures. And Lo said, "I have not seen a dragon, but people say there is one who lives in the clouds where he makes the rain. And on certain days he comes down and runs through the hills which you can see over there where the sun rises."

Liang said, "I wish I could see a dragon. Let's go and find him." Lo said, "All right, I will bring some food to-morrow morning and we will ride on the buffalo to find the dragon."



So the next day they met early, each bringing several rolls and a bag of salt. They had one teapot for both. This they tied to the buffalo's horn. Whenever the buffalo shook his head the brass pot clattered against his horn, making a special noise by which they hoped to frighten the dragon.

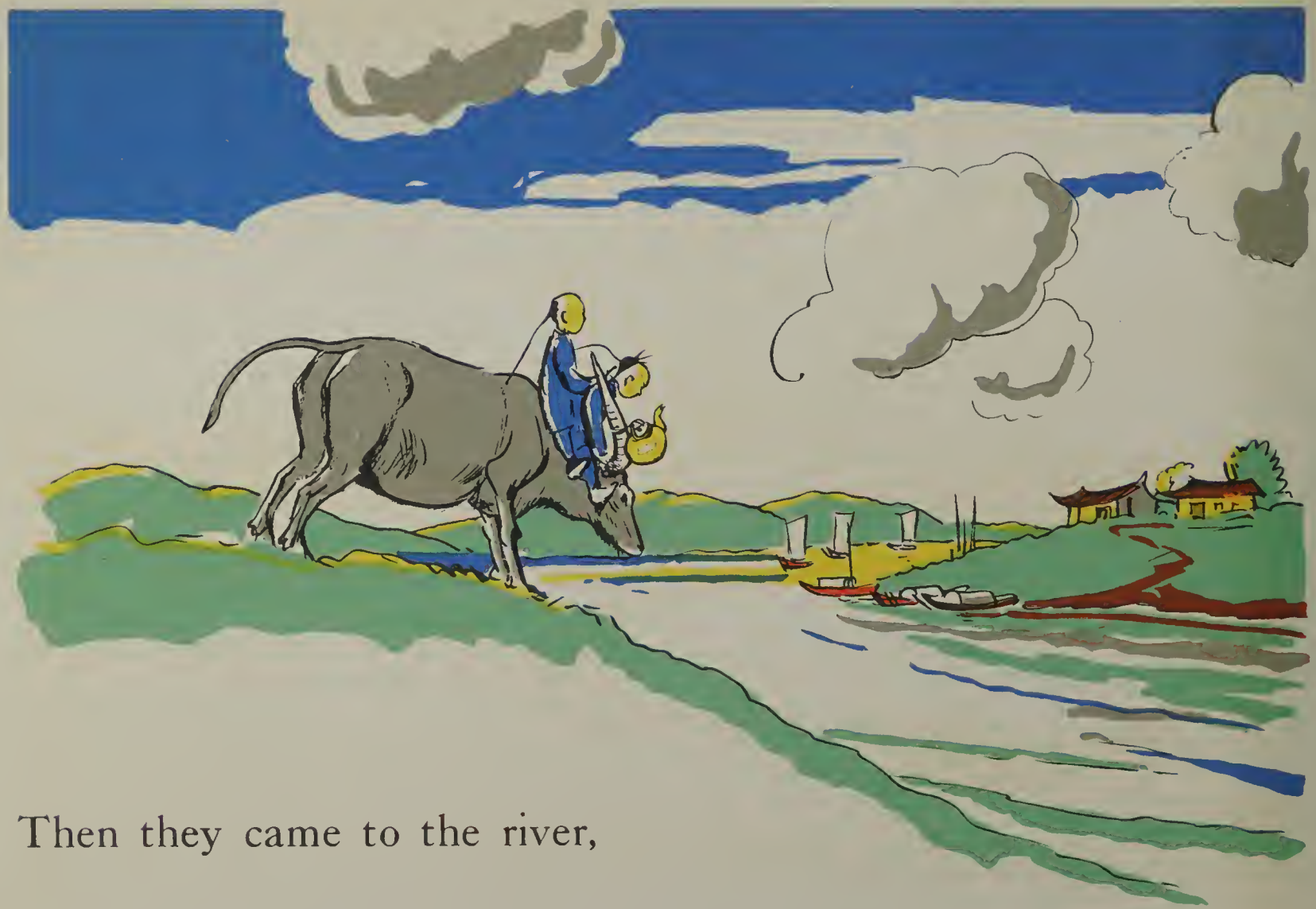


When they had everything placed securely they both mounted the buffalo. Lo took the front seat so that he could grab the horns of the buffalo in case there should be too much speed. Liang sat behind holding on with his arms around Lo's stomach.

And now they were off.

Lo made the buffalo go at full speed and all the people along the road stopped and laughed because they had never seen a buffalo trot so fast. Some of the people asked, "Where are you going, boys?" Others said, "Not so fast or you will soon arrive at the Great Wall and there you'll be at the end of the world!"

Then they passed a buffalo herd, and all the buffaloes rose and looked at the travelers and they all snorted and asked in buffalo language, "Where are you going, big brother, with the boys on your back?" The boys' buffalo then snorted back, "To dragon-land, to dragon-land." And all the buffaloes turned around and grunted, "How silly! There is no dragon, and if there were one he would run away as soon as he saw one of us."



Then they came to the river,

but the buffalo did not stop. He rushed into the water so that the waves

washed over his back and the boys were wet and the rolls were wet and the salt was wet and only the teapot remained dry and clattered against the horn while they swam through the river.

And all the fish in the river

heard the noise and came up

and asked in their small voices which nobody can hear, "Where are you going, half-brother?" They called the buffalo *half-brother*, because he spends half of the day in water pools. But this made the buffalo angry and he said in the voice of the fish which nobody can hear, "Get out of my way, silly fish, or I will drown you." The fish all turned back and laughed and said, "The half-brother is mad."

But by this time the buffalo had reached the river's bank and climbed up and soon was dry. And the boys were dry and the rolls were dry and the salt was dry and the boys sat on the back of the buffalo and ate their breakfast while the buffalo marched on.

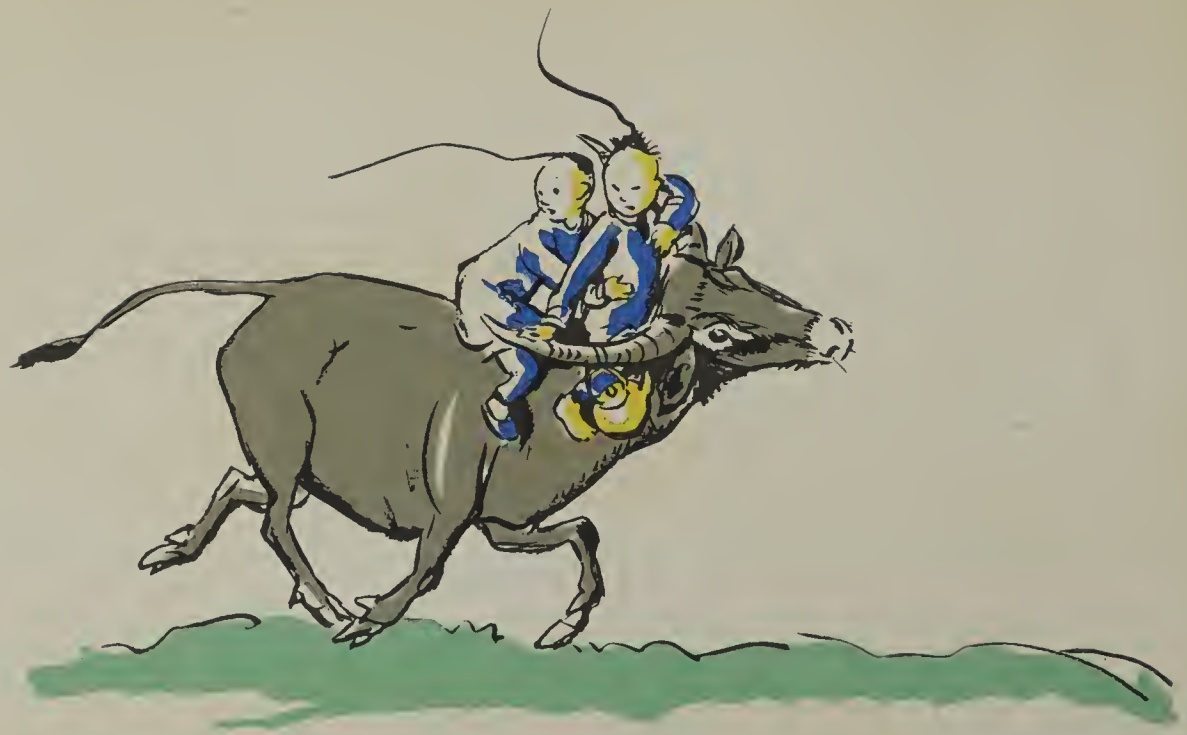
Now they came to the hill, and at the foot of the hill there was a gate, and at the gate sat an old man who asked for the toll. The boys said to the old man, "We have no money, but we are out to kill the dragon and when we come back we will give you one of his scales to make you young and handsome again." Then the old man said, "That is nice of you and you may pass and go straight up the hill and there you will see the dragon on the other side in the valley."

And now the buffalo began to climb up the hill.

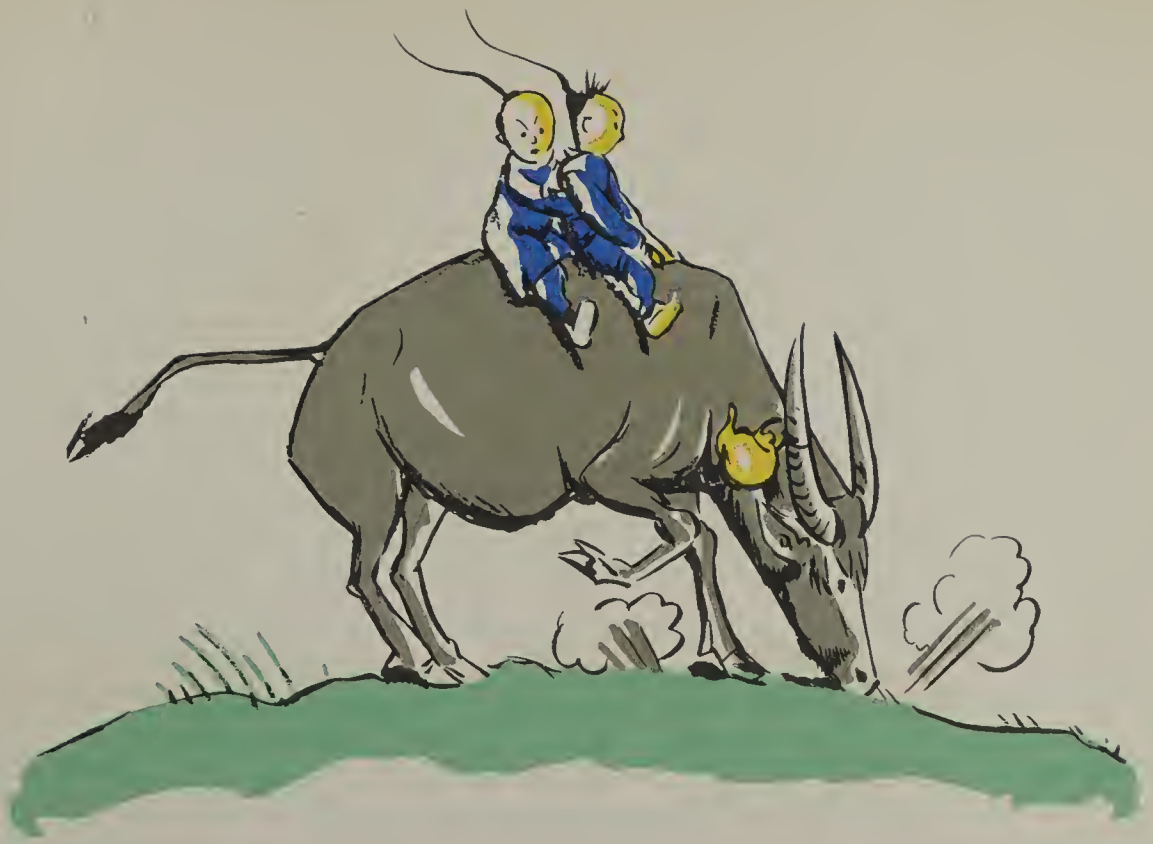
The teapot clattered and made a terrible noise. And then all of a sudden they stood on top of the hill looking over a valley. The breeze was fresh and the sky was clear and when they looked around — there, oh, there,

was the dragon running up the hill on the other side of the valley.

It was a huge dragon with thirty feet and all the colors in the world. The boys shouted and the buffalo snorted and the dragon ran with quick feet. He wiggled his tail and waggled his head, upon which he had horns and out of which stuck a long red tongue.



When the boys saw the tongue they became very quiet and both thought, "It would be better to turn around."



But the buffalo was not a bit afraid. He snorted and stamped his feet and he lowered his head and started off—right straight after that dragon with all

speed, snorting and bellowing all the time. The boys held on, and the teapot clattered, and with that fearful noise they went down the hill and across the valley and up the other hill. The dragon looked around and then ran on, trying to escape. At this the boys felt their courage returning and they yelled and yelled and the buffalo snorted louder than ever and ran with all his might plump into the dragon.

You should have seen the picture! The big dragon broke up into fifteen pieces. And all the pieces were made of paper and out of each piece came two legs and the head of a man.

The buffalo had tumbled right into the head of the dragon. The boys rolled off and when they looked up there stood fifteen men around them laughing as if they'd never stop. Finally they said, "Now what have you done? Don't you know that to-day is the Dragon Festival and we made this dragon from paper?" And then the boys saw that the dragon was no dragon at all! So they excused themselves saying, "We could not help it, we wanted to turn back but we could not stop the buffalo."

And the big buffalo stood there and said in his grunting buffalo language, "There you are! Now it is all my fault. All the way along they talked about killing the dragon and now that I did it, they say it is all my fault!"

But nobody understood the buffalo's language, and the men said to the boys, "Never mind, boys, a wild buffalo is silly and the Festival is over, anyway. But you come back next year and we will have a new dragon and you can creep into the tailpiece and make it wiggle."

So the boys called the buffalo and mounted him and started back. And when they came to the village they both were fast asleep and the buffalo stopped at Lo's house and his mother came out and took them right to bed.

Old Buffalo lay down too. Chewing and grunting, he said, "These boys are making a laughing-stock of me but nevertheless I like them."

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